

# Residential

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## What is this topic?

Residential Zoning is intended to

- (1) meet the housing needs of the City's present and future population; and
- (2) promote the stability and desirability of residential areas.

Title 4 of the Zoning Code regulates bulk and use restrictions in residential areas. Twelve Residence Districts, each designed for a specific purpose and function, are provided. The Code regulates such activities as additions and decks, conversion from single-family (SF) dwellings to multiple-family (MF) (apartments), and the size of allowable structures.

The purpose of this topic is to determine issues with current regulations as well as to identify areas of concern the Code does not currently address.

## How do current approaches impact development?

The current approach controls bulk regulations (related to the physical structure) and use regulations (related to activities). Bulk regulations include lot size minimums, setback requirements, and height restrictions, often via Floor-Area-Ratio (FAR). Uses are restricted to residential and institutional, with some agriculture allowed in the lowest densities, and some commercial allowed in the highest densities.

## What issues with the current approach should TransForm Baltimore help address?

### Additions

- Additions to rowhouses (rear and roof) need to be more sensitive to preserving light and air, historic character of area, and existing scale.
- Accounting for access to light will be increasingly important as solar power gains popularity.
- Zoning code ineffective in preserving neighborhood character.
- Amount of coverage allowed by additions is too permissive "by right" as well as by the BMZA, especially in small open areas like rowhouse backyards, and can lead to a change in the overall scale of the structure.

### Design/Landscaping

- Require more trees - have environmental review for smaller lots.
- Chain link fences are unattractive, can they be dealt with legislatively or in a design review? Is there a way to bring back the traditional Baltimore wrought iron fence, even if in faux?

## **Residential Work Group**

### **Zoning recommendations**

- Formstone is ugly and should not be allowed.
- Signage for non-conforming uses or non-residential uses in R zones should be very restrictive.

### Use

- Create buffers or edge treatments between adjacent residential and other use districts to allow blending between the uses instead of sharp divisions.
- Determine what factors make certain uses not work in some areas. For example, next to some bars houses are abandoned, whereas other bars have occupied apartments directly above. Why the difference?
- Zoning doesn't address the transportation network, particularly as some neighborhood business areas become destination businesses. Issues include 1) increases in congestion, 2) cut through traffic in residential areas, 3) speeding, 4) lack of adequate parking.
- Problems with conversions from single family to multi-family in historically single family neighborhoods.

### Parking

- Parking regulations for conversion of SF to MF too lax; non-related households contribute to parking issues. There is an undersupply of parking in rowhouse neighborhoods where households have multiple cars, particularly with households of unrelated individuals.
- While there is a desire for mixed-use in some places, what uses work and which are nuisances?
- Angled parking is not a good solution to the SF-to-MF issue.

### General

- Zoning regs don't account for individual neighborhood differences.
- Zoning should do more to facilitate communication between neighbors requesting structural or use changes.
- Commercial in residential areas can attract crime – there is a need for buffers.
- Create incentives for lower density, in order to build community.
- Because going from multifamily to single-family is expensive, multifamily conversion should be discouraged.
- Not enough opportunity for community monitoring and review in all aspects of zoning.
- Lot consolidation is too easy, which allows greater density b/c of underlying zoning, larger lots.
- Concern about the definition of family (4 unrelated individuals).
- Concern about clustering of group homes, which has a cumulatively negative impact, including lower property values and vandalism.
- Permitted uses are too broad, code should allow fewer uses "by right," particularly in the higher densities of R9 and R10.
- Churches may no longer be an appropriate use in R zones, as they now place large parking burdens on the neighborhoods.
- Often the zoning category does not match the historic character and density of the neighborhood.

**What proposed approaches should be considered during the TransForm Baltimore process?**

Respond to Communities

- Zoning should reflect the community vision for the neighborhood
- Make interactive zoning maps more accessible online
- Procedure – There should be more community notice for variances and conditional uses (clearer, more time, more specifics of proposal)
- Recognize and plan for neighborhoods that may look similar but have different needs based on economic factors. For example, in some areas allow conversion to multi-family to spur investment.
- Community needs to see code and map at the same time to understand how and where the code will be applied.
- Allow neighborhoods to consider R-1A, R-1B and park and open space zoning.

Preserve Character

- Code should serve to retain and restore traditional design elements.
- Better integrate CHAP regulations with the actual zoning code, especially in preserving neighborhood character.
- Create Pedestrian Friendly walkways

Prevent Nuisances

- Address the problem of use clustering, particularly for group homes and churches, both of which introduce nuisances into strictly residential areas. Code should encourage equal dispersal throughout the city.
- The new code needs to address the tensions between homeowners and renters, particularly those related to parking issues.
- Transportation infrastructure must be integrated into the rezoning effort. Rail, parking, car-sharing programs, should all be considered when allotting for density. Parking is a particular concern of residents.
- Discourage multifamily conversion of single-family homes.

Provide for Changes

- Over time changes occur in the way churches, commercial activity, and group homes are used and impact the neighborhood.
- Energy supply sources may shift in upcoming years, making access to light and air more important than ever.
- Code should be flexible enough to deal with those changes.